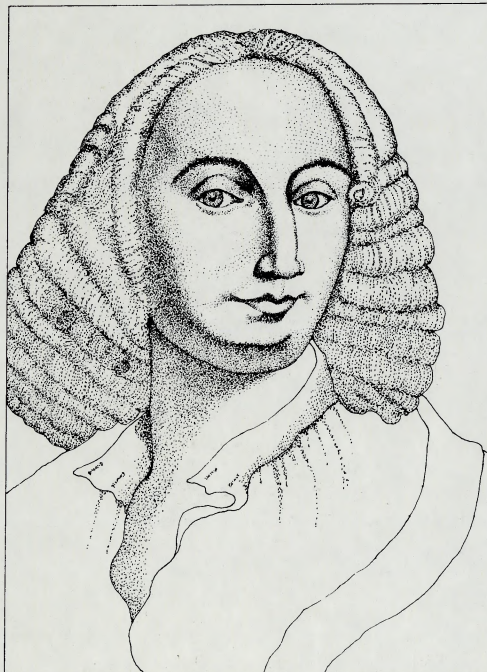


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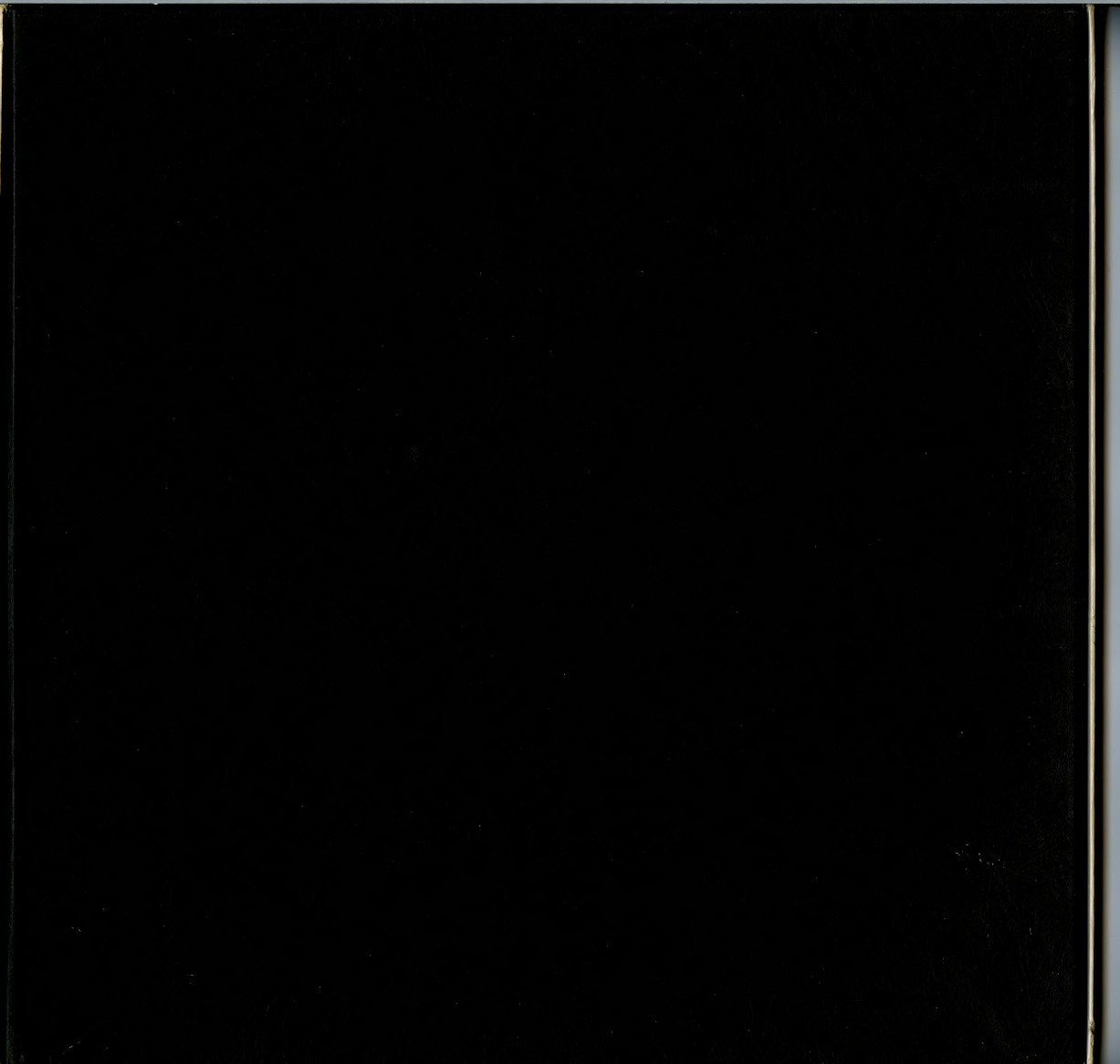


ANTONIO VIVALDI

L'estro armonico, Op. 3
(Complete)



I Solisti Veneti
Claudio Scimone, Director



ANTONIO VIVALDI
(1678-1741)



L'estro armonico, Op. 3
(Complete)



SIDE 1

Concerto No. 1 in D Major for Four Violins, RV 549**

- | | |
|---------------------|------------|
| 1. Allegro | 3. Allegro |
| 2. Largo e spiccato | |

Concerto No. 2 in G Minor for Two Violins, RV 578 +

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 4. Adagio e spiccato | 6. Larghetto |
| 5. Allegro | 7. Allegro |

SIDE 2

Concerto No. 3 in G Major for One Violin, RV 310*

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|------------|------------|
| 1. Allegro | 3. Allegro |
| 2. Largo | |

Concerto No. 4 in E Minor for Four Violins, RV 550**

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| 4. Andante | 6. Adagio |
| 5. Allegro assai | 7. Allegro |

SIDE 3

Concerto No. 5 in A Major for Two Violins, RV 519 +

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 1. Allegro | 3. Allegro |
| 2. Largo | |

Concerto No. 6 in A Minor for One Violin, RV 356*

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|------------|-----------|
| 4. Allegro | 6. Presto |
| 5. Largo | |

SIDE 4

Concerto No. 7 in F Major for Four Violins, RV 567**

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| 1. Andante | 4. Adagio |
| 2. Adagio | 5. Allegro |
| 3. Allegro | |

Concerto No. 8 in A Minor for Two Violins, RV 522 +

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| 6. Allegro | 8. Allegro |
| 7. Larghetto e spiritoso | |

SIDE 5

Concerto No. 9 in D Major for One Violin, RV 230*

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Allegro | 3. Allegro |
| 2. Larghetto | |

Concerto No. 10 in B Minor for Four Violins, RV 580**

- | | |
|---------------------|------------|
| 4. Allegro | 6. Allegro |
| 5. Largo. Larghetto | |

SIDE 6

Concerto No. 11 in D Minor for Two Violins, RV 565 +

- | | |
|---------------------|------------|
| 1. Allegro | 3. Allegro |
| 2. Largo e spiccato | |

Concerto No. 12 in E Major for One Violin, RV 265*

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 4. Allegro | 6. Allegro |
| 5. Largo | |

*Piero Toso, Violin

+Piero Toso, Nane Calabrese, Violins

**Piero Toso, Nane Calabrese, Kazuki Sasaki,
Ronald Valpreda, Violins

I Solisti Veneti

Claudio Scimone, Director



In 1711 a certain Hans Heinrich Beck gave the Musikkollegium in Basel a copy of *L'estro armonico* by Vivaldi, published in Amsterdam by Estienne Roger "the Bookseller." This is the earliest trace we have of the existence of this collection of twelve concerti for string orchestra, four of which (nos. 1, 4, 7, 10) were written for 4 solo violins, four for two solo violins (nos. 2, 5, 8, 11), and four for one solo violin (nos. 3, 6, 9, 12). We can more or less date its publication around the years 1710-1711, when the "Red Priest," born in 1678, was older than thirty. However, some of these concerti were known before this particular publication, as they had already been circulated throughout Europe in manuscript form.

The first edition of Vivaldi's concerti, *L'estro armonico*, bears the number *opera terza*, the term *opera* being reserved for engraved works. *L'estro armonico* is, in fact, preceded by a book of sonatas for three instruments (2 violins and cello) published in 1705 in Venice by Giuseppe Sala, and a collection of sonatas for violin and cello engraved in 1709, also in Venice, by Antonio Bortoli.

"I willingly confess" said the Prete Rosso when speaking to music lovers in a delightfully baroque manner, "that if in the past my compositions have, apart from other shortcomings, had those related to bad printing, their chief advantage now lies in the fact that they will be engraved by the famous M. Estienne Roger." An advantage indeed. And even a great honor, for the French-born Roger had opened a publishing firm in 1695 in Amsterdam which was regarded throughout Europe as the most important center at the time for distributing instrumental music. From Corelli to Albinoni, Locatelli to Tartini, all the Italian composers have appeared in Estienne's catalogues and in those of his colleagues and successors: his daughter, Jeanne, and his son-in-law, Michel Charles Le Cène.

The fact that Vivaldi entrusted his work to a publisher, especially a publisher as famous as Roger, was to have an effect on his actual musical material. Like nearly all his colleagues, Roger published composers' works in installments or small books containing six compositions: thus, Vivaldi's collections engraved by Roger or other publishers each comprise six or twelve sonatas or concerti. Moreover, according to procedure at that time, dictated by practical reasons, Roger did not print "scores" so that all the instrumental parts could be read at the same time, but individual sections for each musician, both for reading and performing purposes. It was thus necessary that a collection should contain only pieces written for one combination of instruments, so that each player could find a part to play in his performing material. The outcome of such a procedure is hardly acceptable for present-day thinking; for when Vivaldi wanted to publish his *opera decima* (opus 10), he had to reduce six concerti written for various formations to flute and string orchestra, thus depriving these compositions of most of their charm and instrumental interest.

Both collections which make up *L'estro armonico* include eight instrumental sections: violins I, II, III, IV; viola I and II; cello; violone and harpsichord.

For a Venetian, the term *estro* suggests the idea of unbridled fantasy, where the flame of genius gives free rein to the imagination. For Vivaldi, *estro armonico* meant "unbridled fantasy in the realm of music." Ten years later, Vivaldi entitled his *opera ottava* (opus 8) *Il Cimento dell'Armonia e dell'Invenzione*, which he composed as a kind of duel between musical imagination and human imagination in general, evidence of the power which music has to describe, better

than any other art, natural human events from the seasons of the year to "pleasure." However, in *opera terza*, the music does not boast descriptive powers. The creative imagination, the composer's *estro*, comes up against the technical formal structures of musical language, his flame sets it alight and his genius breaks down the usual barriers, but he also knows how to shape harmony, elevate it, and glorify it.

Vivaldi's *opera terza* is a decisive step. *L'estro armonico* is one of those colossal works which opens up new paths, not rejecting the past, but on the contrary, working with it to make up a whole of richness, complexity, and variety which is rare.

Opera ottava (opus 8) and *opera decima* (op. 10) are as striking on account of their simplicity, luminosity, purity, and their perfection which is so elaborate, polished, and refined, as *L'estro armonico* is essentially different; its form is as if "raw," while its substance is powerful and incandescent.

Reminiscences of the earlier *Sinfonia avanti l'opera* are mixed with elements dating from the very origins of instrumental music. "French" style alternates with an undeniably Italian language; the confrontation of a small group of instruments (concertino) with a bigger orchestral block (*grosso*), which is so typical of the *concerto grosso*, often gives way to either more or less symphonic writing or to a frankly concertante style. Corelli's *Concerti grossi* (1712), the fruit of thirty years' work, had not yet left the Roger workshops when *L'estro armonico* had already relegated future works to the past. Such was the explosive force of the genius which gave this transitional work an almost unique position in 18th-century musical history. Twenty years were to pass before Tartini, in his second volume of his *opera prima*, went from the exaltation of the individual to the passionate analysis of his private world. This was to be the next important stage in musical thinking.

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L'estro armonico, concerti consacrati all'Altezza Reale Ferdinando III, gran Principe di Toscana da Don Antonio Vivaldi, musico di violino e Maestro de Concerti del Pio Ospedale della Pietà di Venezia Opera Terza, these words appear on the cover of the Amsterdam edition. This dedication to Ferdinando III with its pompous wording presents a problem: should we read it as a symbol, a calculation, or as mere chance? Ferdinando III was never to reign. In 1713 he died of syphilis while his father, Cosimo III, was still alive. A lover of music and the arts (compared to his father who was strict and narrow-minded) and friend of Scarlatti, Peri, Handel, Bibbiena, Ferdinando III was regarded by his friends as well as his enemies as the champion of debauchery, dissipation, and intemperance. His followers hailed him as "the brightest light in Tuscany," recognizing his destiny as "martyr of Venus and disciple of the Graces," as a symbol of the struggle of art against obscurity. In all probability, Vivaldi, a practical, circumspect man, regarded the descendant of the Medici as simply good for fleecing, a man used to spending enormous sums of money on the arts, thus remaining true to his motto *Restringer non mi posso* ("Limit myself I cannot"). One thing is certain, however, the fact that Vivaldi's work, which glorifies the imagination and freedom, is dedicated to such a personality, assumes a symbolic meaning in our eyes. It may be that both intentions are valid, since Vivaldi coupled a diplomatic commercial skill with lively intelligence and artistic genius. The years during which *L'estro armonico* was created and completed marked an important initial stage of his rise to fame. *Professore veneto* ("Venetian

teacher") is his title given on his op. 1 (1705), apparently as a contrast to the epithet *dilettante veneto* attributed to Tomaso Albinoni: the "professional" character appears in this case as a basic part of Vivaldi's personality, his career, and his works.

As regards his career, in September 1703, Antonio Vivaldi became violin and "English-style viol" teacher at the Pietà in Venice (a heavy responsibility as indicated by the fees amounting to one hundred ducats per year). In 1709, his title on the *opera seconda* (op. 2) qualified him as *Maestro dei Concerti*, which in more modern terms means official institution composer "with the duty of teaching the girls the art of composing and performing concertos." This appointment at the Pietà followed closely on the sacerdotal ordination which Vivaldi received in March 1703; however, a little earlier, the "Red Priest" used a congenital illness (*strettezza di petto*) which was undoubtedly a form of asthma, and to which Vivaldi seems never to have referred previously, to request exemption from saying Mass; from then on, he devoted himself entirely to music. In view of this series of events (accession to priesthood, nomination at the Pietà, renouncing of sacerdotal duties), how much is calculated and how much is pure chance? We probably shall never know, although the latest biographical studies swing the balance in favor of clever maneuvering on Vivaldi's part: the post as *Maestro della Pietà* was at that time extremely important in Venice, and there is no doubt that in order to win the deal, Vivaldi must have set up a clever plan. At that time, there were several charitable institutions for orphans and foundlings who were educated there; out of the four institutions of this type, which accepted only girls and directed them especially towards the art of music, the *Ospedale della Pietà* was regarded as the most important; public performances which took place there attracted listeners from all over Europe, not to mention Venetian music lovers.

The theater, which was for Vivaldi to be the scene of his hardest struggles and also the main source of his fame and income, was not to enter the great Venetian composer's life until after *L'estro armonico* was published. Meanwhile, Vivaldi continued to consolidate his position at the Pietà, a highly reputed post *par excellence* which made his name, ideas, and instrumental works famous; it was also a place for collective work, research, and progress in the knowledge of the technical and chromatic possibilities of the instruments, both as solo instruments as well as in an infinity of combinations. In other words, the Pietà was to remain an "experimental center" (in the modern sense of the term) for new techniques and unexplored sound until Vivaldi's death. In 1740, just one year before he died, Vivaldi, in his Pietà "workshop," wrote his tremendous *Concerto P. 16* for 2 mandolins, 2 theorbos, 2 recorders, 2 *salmoe*, 2 trumpets, cello and 2 violins in *tromba marina*, an avant-garde work in the true sense of the word, which has never been imitated and, of its kind, never outshone.

During the years over which he became famous, Vivaldi's personality summed up the essential traits of the Venetian spirit. Despite his audacious temperament, free of prejudice, Vivaldi developed with extreme ease among the traditions, tastes, and fashions of his milieu; he knew how to benefit from it and assimilate the best with that irony and somewhat cynical scepticism which are some of the elements—or perhaps causes—of all Venetians' hostility towards pompous expression and taste for simplicity and clarity. Opus 3, dedicated with baroque solemnity and conformism to the brilliant and from "amorous disease" suffering prince, Ferdinando III de Medici, by a priest who did not say Mass but who

put all his fervor into experimenting with music of the future in a school for young orphan girls to which he was appointed in the most traditional manner, appears symbolic. It is that simple day-to-day reality, that "professional" working experience which builds awe-inspiring bridges towards the future; this is the genius of the Venetians which we find from Monteverdi to Vivaldi, from Tartini—over the centuries—to Franco Donatoni and Luigi Nono.

Vivaldi's way of thinking is clear and unmistakable; it appears simple where in reality it is most complex, and elementary where science is at its most subtle. It is based on both the loftiest of inspiration and that secular tendency towards luminosity, simplicity, and freedom from all pomposity and redundancy which is characteristic of the Venetian spirit.

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In his opus 3, Vivaldi gradually gives the solo instrument the leading role which it was to have for two centuries. The *Prete Rosso* achieved this in successive stages: a) he paid tribute to more or less archaic "communal" forms; b) within the framework of the above tribute, he made room for improvisation for the solo instruments in the style of his period. Slow movements in the style dear to Corelli, composed of a series of chords on which the solo instruments are called upon to improvise, are frequent in *L'estro armonico*; c) he gave increasing and more expressive importance to one group of solo instruments; d) when the above importance became a sort of polycentrism and completely broke down the traditional harmonic structures (particularly in concerto no. 10, keystone to the entire work), Vivaldi created a new balance, stressing the role of two solo instruments (concerti nos. 5 and 8) and then of one solo instrument which remained the undisputed master.

With these starting points in this tremendous structural development, *L'estro armonico* gives us a multiplicity of traditions and applications borrowed from both instrumental music and the lyric theatre. As regards instrumental music, the trio sonata (2 violins and cello, plus continuo), a synthesis of so-called church forms (with their free succession of slow and quick tempi) and chamber forms (basically made up of dance movements), had become the "classical" model to which all the most well-known composers referred, from Corelli to Albinoni and Vivaldi himself.

The *concerto grosso* featured a contrast in sound in the form of the orchestral mass, the "grossi," with a small group of instruments, the "concertino," of extremely varied formations. Corelli's opus 6 was based on the formula, which from then on became traditional, of the concertino for three instruments, the very protagonist of the trio sonata, thus reducing two forms into one. During the forty years he spent at the Pietà as music teacher, Vivaldi used the *concerto grosso*, an experimental form *par excellence*, providing the concertino with the widest variety in number and timbre combinations, and exhausted nearly all possibilities.

In our view, the solo concerti in *L'estro armonico* do not come in direct line from the *Concerto à cinq* which (as in Albinoni's work published in 1707) gave the solo instrument chiefly ornamental parts. Vivaldi felt the need to cause a polycentric explosion in the *concerto grosso* in order to put the solo concerto on a wider and bigger basis.

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It was undoubtedly his love for musical theatre which urged Vivaldi to bring about a revolution in the instrumental field and which gave him the means to do so. Although opus 3 seems a long way off from imitative or illustrative music,

which was to be most influential ten years later in *Il Cimento*, it gives a clear indication of how Vivaldi's Venetian opera went about merging into the world of "pure" music.

a) *Sinfonia avanti l'opera* ("Symphony before the opera"): "Before the curtain rises, and in order to call the attention of the audience, a symphony shall be played by various instruments"—these are the words of Marco da Gagliano in his preface to *Daphné* (1608). A series of chords were often used to bring the audience into the theatre and to stop conversation, something in the style of the bell used nowadays. This "symphony" soon took on a musical significance, and eventually included three or more movements. Vivaldi paid express tribute to the earliest form of symphony using an austere series of repeated chords, enriched by mysterious and tragic discords (see the beginning of Concerto no. 2); b) the opera melody: this is the origin of the big lyric adagio with which Vivaldi outdoes all his contemporaries, which appeared in the slow movements in opus 3 (Concerto no. 9); c) strong unison in the full orchestra with repeated notes or octave intervals which make the introductions to rapid movements (no. 5, 1st movement) or slow movements (no. 8, 2nd movement) highly dramatic; d) instrumental virtuosity: it was opera, and not instrumental music, very often subject to religious requirements, which provided the first great examples of writing, bringing out the virtuosity of the violin; e) details of instrumental writing: the fact that there are two separate viola sections, for instance, does not appear to be justified by the requirements of a collection where the violas usually are played in unison, if we take into consideration the fact that Roger had to engrave one more section and that this practical side of the matter cannot be ignored.

L'ESTRO ARMONICO CONCERTI

A) General

Variety of form. During a memorable series of conferences held in Padua on the topic "Vivaldi's Variety," Marc Pincherle pinpointed the infinite diversity of formal diagrams which the *Prete Rosso* invented for the 12 concerti of this collection. There are no two the same. Regarding instrumental color, we can say that if Vivaldi is a master of the sound palette when he uses rare instruments, or combines disparate timbres, he is absolutely unique in the history of music for his skill in obtaining effects of really symphonic richness and abundance with only 2 or 4 violins.

The movements. Four of *L'estro armonico* concerti start with an introduction which, in nos. 2, 4, and 7, is a slow majestic movement. The famous introduction to no. 11 is, on the other hand, based on a rapid virtuosic cadenza for three concertino instruments: based on an energetic rhythm, it has an awe-inspiring effect due to repeated insistent D notes in the violins and austere motifs outlined by the cello which end in strong descending scales in the instrument's lowest tessitura. We are a long way off from the traditional *concerto da chiesa* ("church concerto") in the Adagio e spiccato (which introduces no. 2), the repeated staccato chords of which are those of the "symphony before the opera," as in no. 4, the pathetic splendor of which lies in the "French" style rhythm. The introduction to no. 7 is an original synthesis of explicit quotations from the past (Corellian harmonic series at the beginning; "choral" nature of the tutti) and a very free style in the dialogue and ornamentation of the four solo parts.

Vivaldi conforms to academic tradition in his first fast movements: in all the concerti (except for no. 4), the allegros are 4/4.

Tonalities. In opus 3, Vivaldi used 10 different keys as the main tonality, however, they all belong to a very simple har-

monic cycle and have no particularly striking features. Seven of the middle movements are written in the main key (as opposed to only 3 in *Il Cimento*) which tends to indicate clearly that the *Prete Rosso* did not regard the tonal diversity between the different movements as an important element of variety.

The slow movements put the development of the entire work into concrete form. As for the final movements, the progression of the collection illustrates the development of the Vivaldi finale from a typically Corellian style (the *gigues* of the first two concerti) to a freer type of composition capable of greater variety as, for example, the final Allegro of no. 11, a bold brilliant 4/4.

B) Order of Presentation

The order in which the series of 12 concerti printed by Roger was presented was undoubtedly carefully studied by Vivaldi. From what we know of the composer, we may surmise that something as important as the order of presentation was not left to chance or to the whims of the publisher. An analysis of the order in which the concerti are performed clearly shows that Vivaldi was conscious of the profound significance of this series. Four times in a row a concerto for four violins is followed by a concerto for two violins and then a solo concerto; this arrangement reveals a tendency toward the liberation of the solo instrument (note that the cello obbligato, although it has an equal role with the violins in concerti nos. 2, 7, 10 and 11, does not basically influence this arrangement). The Corellian scheme of the first concerto decreases: the full, slow, lyrical movement, so characteristic of Vivaldi, is heard in Concerto no. 5 and reaches its climax in concerti nos. 8, 9, and 11 and 12. The structural complexity of the concerti for four violins increases from no. 1 to no. 4 and no. 7, and finally to no. 10, the climax of the whole collection: in its middle movement, the bare chords of the *Sinfonia avanti l'opera* melt into a filigree of remarkable subtlety and richness: with each instrument intent on its own motive, it presents a mosaic, very simple in its complexity, its richness, and its diversity.

The only concerti in the series in which the cello obbligato joins the two solo violins for a typical Corellian concertino are nos. 2 and 11. In this, we can see the distance that separates the old and the new Vivaldi. The second concerto is powerful and dramatic, but, from the point of view of form, it remains within the classic framework of the concerto grosso (with the exception of the introduction discussed above). Concerto no. 11, on the other hand, begins with a highly personalized cadenza and continues with a fugue from which emerge, with a prodigious equilibrium and originality, the concertino instruments, while the third part is reminiscent of the middle movement of some concerto for violin and orchestra.

C) First Book

Concerto no. 1 in D major opens the series in an atmosphere of springtime freshness, lightness, and virtuosity. The first movement, characteristic of Vivaldi, is composed almost exclusively of solos (the *tutti* have a total of only 13 bars out of 85); the four concertante violins often come together in twos (the first two generally opposing the third and fourth); or else they take off individually in brilliant flights. The second movement begins with solemn octave calls that resound in a dramatic dotted rhythm that is taken up by the violas, while the ornamental two first violins create that atmosphere of light melancholy so characteristic of Vivaldi. The permanent presence of the *tutti's* motive in the

accompanying parts to the solo—which is heard again in Concerto no. 8—was, for Johann Sebastian Bach, a source of study and meditation. The finale is a Corellian inspired *gigue*, in which Vivaldi's personality appears unmistakably in the final short cadence of the first violin.

We have already mentioned Concerto no. 2 in the introduction above. The first movement, whose majestic character is like that of the *Sinfonia avanti l'opera*, is followed by two typically Corellian pieces, forming the framework for the symphonic Adagio where the solos repeat the mottos traced by the *tutti*. The vehement Allegro brings to mind, as does the tragic *gigue* (allegro) finale, Corelli's 8th concerto with the G minor common key and (in the final movement) the elegiac attitude of the solo instruments countering the domination of the ripieno.

Concerto no. 3, balanced, brilliant, and joyful, is especially notable for the dramatic resonances of its Adagio with its recitative solo that becomes at times pure melody; the resonances are introduced and interrupted by heavy *tutti* chords.

With Concerto no. 4, we are in a true Vivaldian atmosphere. From the first solo of the opening Andante, the responses with a pointed rhythm of the four solo instruments and violas create an astonishing effect of symphonic richness and splendor. The pathetic and grandiose Andante is followed by the intense, dramatic Allegro assai, where the four soloists pursue one another in a dialogue fraught with anguish. The short Adagio (a few bars) is followed by the final Allegro which is unambiguously Vivaldian in its melodic mottos and answers, its "violinistic" treatment of basses, and the incandescent splendor of the instrumental colors.

Concerto no. 5 is luminous, brilliant, and full of virtuosity in the initial and final movements, the first of which begins, in theatrical style, with a series of 15 As repeated in octaves by the entire orchestra. Although the concerto is written for two violins, the slow movement has a broad melody, ethereal and apollinian, for a single violin, to which the other joins in with brief notes.

Concerto no. 6, one of the best known of the series, is part of the repertoire of nearly every young violinist. Highly original, the two themes of the first and last movements evoke some aerial dance steps to which is soon added the opposition of the vehement elan of the bows. The Largo (*cantabile*) is interesting for its arrangement of harmonic accompaniment for three violins and a viola which play, separately, in the same range as the first violin (perhaps this is how we should always conceive of the Vivaldian continuo), thus creating a marvelous swarm of sound around the expressive curves of the melody.

D) Second Book

Concerto no. 7 in F major, which begins the second part of the series, is rich in Corellian allusions, the most obvious of which is the double citation of the gavotte taken from Corelli's Sonata op. 5, no. 10 (already used for the finale of the third concerto of *L'Estro*). This gavotte, which served as a model for numerous composers of the period, had also given Vivaldi the harmonic scheme for the Allemande in the fourth sonata of opus 2: the composer traces, in ascending intervals, his solemn and splendid mottos with their vaguely martial rhythm. This motto appears suddenly in the joyful, vibrant Allegro of Concerto no. 7, introduced by the fourth violin, briefly exposed, then taken up by the first violin. This surprise (rare in a monothematic universe, i.e., one based on a single musical idea) gives considerable importance to the citation of the Corellian gavotte, which is present from

the very first notes of the concerto: a variation on this theme, in 3/4, forms the beginning of the piece and serves as the basis for a series of variations for the four solo instruments. We come across other clearly Corellian references in the tutti of the introduction and in the very structure of the final movement. No doubt Vivaldi, with this second book, wanted to confirm his links with traditional music; but the Corellian theme reflected in the modern mirror of these four violin solos gives it quite another dimension, and the reference to the past only serves to emphasize the appearance of new perspectives and unexplored horizons.

Concerto no. 8 (the most famous of the series, along with no. 11) is without a doubt one of the most admirable pages in the history of music. Here we have two violin solos with no cello obbligato. In the two fast movements, the solo instruments are surrounded by the tuttis, which provide the impetus for a vibrant, vehement discourse, which abounds not only in ornamental mottoes but in new themes as well: that of the first solo, for example, or the elegiac motto of the second violin which forms a sort of second theme to the first movement. Here the tuttis create an expressive atmosphere, that of the *Tempesta* by Giordano with its tragic grandeur and its serenity.

The second movement begins with a solemn motto, in octaves, executed by the whole orchestra. The theatrical influence is evident here: the best definition of this page is "lyric duet." The purity and the admirable delicacy of the melodic lines, the symmetric answers which form the accompaniment, do not diminish any of the expressive warmth, the truly "vocal" pathos of this piece. The final movement is highly original in its instrumental arrangement: at one place, the second violin plays forte a single, splendid melodic phrase, accompanied by the first violin in sixteenth notes.

Concerto no. 9 for violin is especially notable for its middle movement. Marc Pincherle saw in it a typical example of a certain form of lyric aria, the *divisen* aria. Here the tuttis begin with a chord motto, then the solo instrument plays the first two bars of its part; the tuttis repeat the introduction, and the solo instrument takes up its part again from the beginning, now following it to the end. The lyric character of this admirable "aria cantabile" for violin and orchestra is evident: the traditional melody here takes on an expressive beauty and elegance in its curves which it would be difficult to surpass.

Concerto no. 10 for four violins is perhaps one of Vivaldi's best creations. The mottoes of the tuttis, in the first and final movements are characterized by a rich fantasy embroidered with ornamentation; full of life, their counterpoint, simple as it is, has an undeniable impact. In the solos, the independence of the four violins (joined by the cello obbligato) goes to the point of frenzy in the melody, and one is surprised to hear them at times come together or soar gracefully above the prolonged harmonies of the ripieno. The concerto grosso here attains, thanks to the perfection of its structure, its harmony, and its rhythm, the highest degree of structural tension among its constituent elements, which could not be surpassed without their flying to pieces. Therefore, this form will be forced to adopt a less radical position, focusing on the search for new instrumental combinations and sound effects. The way is now open to a true solo concerto.

With Concerto no. 11, we have the archetype of the concerto grosso for two violins and cello obbligato. Before he abandoned the traditional form of concerto grosso during his

opus 3, Vivaldi wanted to give an example of the various ways in which this form can be handled and of the different structures to which it can be joined. He seemed to want to show that, whatever paths it might take in the future, he was master for the moment of the traditional concerto. Thus the introduction consists of a long cadenza by the three concerto instruments followed by a sequence of chords, among which the interpreters can improvise as they wish. There follows a fugue, from which the solos of the concertino emerge with striking contrast, without destroying the fugue's structural unity, which is one of the most academically rigid structures imaginable. In the finale, the three instruments carry on a domestic dialogue, while the tuttis continue to oppose them. In contrast to the *Concerti grossi*, opus 8 by Torelli, who was more or less a contemporary of Vivaldi, the first violin remains master of the game. And in the second movement, the "siciliana" movement, introduced by a vigorous, solemn tutti, it alone traces, on the anxious harmonies of the violins and violas, the curves of a sublimely serene melody, the climax of classic instrumentation.

Concerto no. 12 concludes the series in an atmosphere of triumphant joy, freshness, and charm, interrupted by the choral song of the tuttis and the moving melody of the solo in the central Adagio.

• • •

As is clear from what we have said, reading the *Lestro armonico* is not for amateurs. The phases of our research (finding the original text, deciphering the abbreviations, ornamentation, the rhythmic symbols, etc.) were only the preliminary steps to the basic investigation. For a work which serves as the meeting place of styles, forms, heterogeneous and quite different repertoires, it was necessary to establish for each piece its origins, to find the model to which the composer referred, to determine in what way he conceived it, and the conventions governing it (as Donington says, "it is convention and not notation that determines execution").

Claudio Scimone



Claudio Scimone, a native of Padua, is one of the most outstandingly brilliant musicians of this generation. He founded I Solisti Veneti some years ago with the idea of injecting new life into the interpretation of Italian 18th-century music which he felt had been sadly neglected. His orchestral players have performed with considerable success in over fifty countries and have been particularly successful in their imaginative interpretations of works by Vivaldi and Albinoni.

Timing:

Side 1: 3:06, 3:56, 2:51 (9:59), 2:34, 2:37, 3:56, 2:48 (12:04)/22:12
Side 2: 2:02, 3:18, 2:23 (7:50), 3:31, 2:30, 0:46, 1:57 (8:52)/16:50
Side 3: 2:49, 1:53, 2:41 (7:32), 3:32, 2:26, 2:41 (8:56)/16:36
Side 4: 4:25, 1:43, 2:41, 1:46, 1:51 (12:39), 3:25, 4:44, 3:15 (11:32)/24:18
Side 5: 2:19, 4:27, 2:12 (9:04), 3:43, 3:21, 2:29 (10:38)/19:50
Side 6: 4:55, 3:40, 2:36 (11:11), 3:37, 4:36, 2:59 (11:38)/22:42

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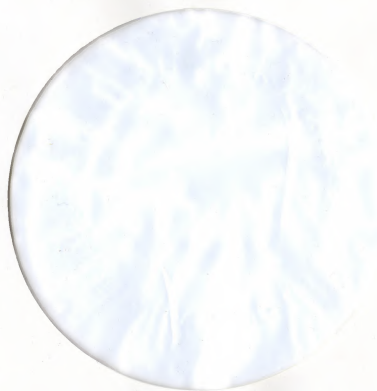
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STEREO
ANTONIO VIVALDI

MHS 1341
SIDE 1

(22:12)
33 1/3 RPM

L'ESTRO ARMONICO, OP. 3
(Complete)

Concerto No. 1 in D Major for Four Violins, RV 549**
1. Allegro; 2. Largo e spiccato; 3. Allegro
Concerto No. 2 in G Minor for Two Violins, RV 578*
4. Adagio e spiccato; 5. Allegro
6. Larghetto; 7. Allegro

*Temp. Yoda, Nena Calabrese, Violins
**Rec. Foto, Nena Calabrese, Kazuo
Sasaki, Ronald Valpreda, Violins

[Solisti Veneti]

Claudio Scimone, Director

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STEREO

ANTONIO VIVALDI

MHS 1341
SIDE 2

(15:50)
33 1/3 RPM

L'ESTRO ARMONICO, OP. 3
(Complete)

Concerto No. 3 in G Major for One Violin, RV 310*
1. Allegro; 2. Largo; 3. Allegro
Concerto No. 4 in E Minor for Four Violins, RV 550**
4. Ad-Lente; 5. Allegro assai; 6. Adagio; 7. Allegro

*Piero Toso, Violin
**Piero Toso, Mame Catebrese, Kazuki
Sachi, Ronald Wajpods, Violins

Stefano Vignati
Claudio Simone, Director

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STEREO

ANTONIO VIVALDI

MHS 4342
SIDE 3

(14:36)
33 1/3 RPM

L' ESTRO ARMONICO, OP. 3
(Complete)

Concerto No. 5 in A Major for Two Violins, RV 519*
1. Allegro; 2. Largo; 3. Allegro
Concerto No. 6 in A Minor for One Violin, RV 356*
4. Allegro; 5. Largo; 6. Presto

*Piero Tosi, Violin
Piero Tosi, Nando Calzavara, Violins

† Boris Vainet
Claudio Scimone, Director

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STEREO

ANTONIO VIVALDI

MHS 4342
SIDE 4

(24-18)
33 1/3 RPM

L'ESTRO ARMONICO, OP. 3
(Complete)

Concerto No. 7 in F Major for Four Violins, RV 567**

1. Adante; 2. Adagio; 3. Allegro;

4. Adagio; 5. Allegro

Concert. No. 8 in A Minor for Two Violins, RV 522+

6. Allegro; 7. Larghetto e spiritoso; 8. Allegro

+Piero Tosi, Nania Calabrese, Violins

**Piero Tosi, Nania Calabrese, Sasaki
Bisaki, Ronald Vajprek, Violins

† Solisti Veneti

Claudio Simionato, Director

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STEREO

ANTONIO VIVALDI

MHS 1343
SIDE 5

(19:50)
33 1/3 RPM

L'ESTRO ARMONICO, OP. 3
(Complete)

Concerto No. 9 in D Major for One Violin, RV 230*
1. Allegro; 2. Larghetto; 3. Allegro
Concerto No. 10 in B Minor for Four Violins, RV 560**
4. Allegro; 5. Largo, Larghetto; 6. Allegro

*Piero Tosi, Violin
**Piero Tosi, Nena Calabrese, Kazuki
Suzuki, Ronald Valpreda, Violins

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STEREO

ANTONIO VIVALDI

MHS 4343
SIDE 6

[22:42]
33 1/3 RPM

L'ESTRO ARMONICO, OP. 3

(Complete)

Concerto No. 11 in D Minor for Two Violins, RV 565*

1. Allegro; 2. Largo e spiccato; 3. Allegro

Concerto No. 12 in E Major for One Violin, RV 265*

4. Allegro; 5. Largo; 6. Allegro

*Piero Tosi, Violin

*Piero Tosi, Nena Calabrese, Violin

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Claudio Scornone, Director

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